

# Calfed won't contribute to flood control

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Appeal-Democrat

Calfed, the massive state-federal program that will affect California's water policies for decades, has no interest in Northern California flood control, a Calfed official said Tuesday.

Dick Daniel, Calfed's assistant director, told a Yuba City town hall meeting that flood protection north of the delta was never a Calfed concern. It's up to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and local entities, he said.

"This is something totally new for me when you're saying that north of the delta is not part of the Calfed responsibility," said Sen. Maurice Johannessen, R-Redding. "That is totally off the wall. You have been doing this for years, you've been up all over the north state talking about it."

A surprised Johannessen asked Daniel, "What the hell have you guys been doing for the last few years if you have no interest north of the delta?"

Calfed is "not delegated responsibility to deal with flood management outside of the delta," Daniel said.

Johannessen called the meeting to learn more about Calfed, which will release an updated environmental report June 25, and to stir community opposition to SB 496, the Yuba River wild-and-scenic bill. About 100 people showed up.

Calfed's interests north of the delta include water supply, environmental restoration, water conservation and water quality.

"I'm astounded to hear them confirm publicly that they intend not to give us flood protection," said Sutter County Administrator Larry Combs.

Daniel said Calfed is interested in levee setbacks and flood bypasses.

"In order to restore the delta environment, one of the critical needs is to re-create some alternatives for that vast floodplain process that once occurred in this valley," Daniel said.

SB 496, a bill to designate 39 miles of the south Yuba River wild-and-scenic, also would have no effect on Calfed, Daniel said.

Calfed doesn't propose any dams on the Yuba, and making the river wild and scenic would not impact Calfed's ecosystem restoration efforts in the Yuba watershed, Daniel said.

Other speakers opposed the bill carried by Sen. Byron Sher, D-Stanford. It has passed the Senate and is now pending in an Assembly committee.

"I can tell you, you can tell Sher the next time he needs water, tell him to call the Culligan man," former Nevada County Supervisor Rene Antonson told Johannessen.

Combs said the Yuba River "is a fire hose aimed at the heart of Yuba City. It is dangerous. It caused the 1955 flood. It caused the 1986 flood, and it caused the 1997 flood."

Sutter County is "not necessarily pro-dam, but we are pro-flood control for Sutter County," Combs said. "Sutter County is at risk."

The Yuba County Water Agency is studying flood control options for the Yuba, even though "those of us in this area don't understand why we need to study things to death ... All of a sudden, somebody decides to designate the Yuba River wild and scenic, which will take some flood control options off

the table," he said.

Combs likened SB 496 to a law that allows fires to burn unchecked in Nevada County.

"Nobody would advocate that," he said. "That's insane."

Supporting wild and scenic, Combs said, is like advocating that "Marysville, Linda, Olivehurst or Yuba City flood. That is not acceptable to Sutter County. That is not acceptable to this region."

Adequate flood protection "really boils down to an issue of public safety and economic security for our area," said Curt Aikens, the Water Agency's assistant administrator. "We've had a flood an average of every 10 years."

SB 496 "takes away some of the significant flood control options to comprehensively protect the Sacramento Valley," said David Guy, executive director of the Northern California Water Association. "It will take away some of the water supply features not only in the present but in the future in the foothills."

Steve Danna Jr. of Danna & Danna Inc. said his farming operation is still recovering from the 1997 flood.

"We still have a lot of problems, and we still have a lot of things at risk," Danna said. "In Sacramento, you have a huge population at risk. This is what really bothers me. When you see a bill like this come up, you're shocked."

Danna said agriculture wants a role in the Calfed process, but "at what point do you continue to play this game, and at what point do you get out. That is a major fact when you look at (SB 496)."

Johannessen said he tried to reason with his Senate colleagues about the Sher bill, but it passed anyway.

"How sad it is when you have common sense," he said. "That's a terrible thing to have because it gets you frustrated."